

In the United States Court of Federal Claims
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS
No. 20-1795V
(not to be published)

AMANDA DECOOK,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Chief Special Master Corcoran

Filed: June 7, 2023

Special Processing Unit (SPU);
Attorney's Fees and Costs

Heather Varney Menezes, Shaheen & Gordon, PA, Manchester, MA, for Petitioner.

Austin Joel Egan, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.

DECISION ON ATTORNEY'S FEES AND COSTS¹

On December 8, 2020, Amanda DeCook filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleges that she suffered a Table Injury – Shoulder Injury Related to Vaccine Administration as a result of her October 16, 2019 influenza vaccination. Petition, ECF No. 1. On December 9, 2022, I issued a decision awarding compensation to Petitioner based on the Respondent's proffer. ECF No. 36.

¹ Because this Decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action taken in this case, it must be made publicly accessible and will be posted on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, and/or at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/uscourts/national/cofc>, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2018) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the Decision will be available to anyone with access to the internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), Petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, I agree that the identified material fits within this definition, I will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all section references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2018).

Petitioner has now filed a motion for attorney's fees and costs, requesting an award of \$26,077.83 (representing \$25,345.10 for attorney's fees and \$732.73 for attorney's costs). Petitioner's Application for Attorney's Fees and Costs ("Motion") filed Apr. 27, 2023, ECF No. 42. In accordance with General Order No. 9, Petitioner filed a signed statement indicating that Petitioner incurred no out-of-pocket expenses. ECF No. 42-4.

Respondent reacted to the motion on May 6, 2023, indicating that he is satisfied that the statutory requirements for an award of attorney's fees and costs are met in this case, but deferring resolution of the amount to be awarded to my discretion. Respondent's Response to Motion at 2-3, 3 n.2, ECF No. 43. Petitioner did not file a reply thereafter.

The rates requested for work performed through the end of 2022 are reasonable and consistent with our prior determinations, and will therefore be adopted. Petitioner has also requested the hourly rate of \$434 for 2023 work performed by attorney Heather V. Menezes, representing a rate increase of \$34; and hourly rate of \$161 for paralegal work performed in 2023; Motion at 1-2. I find these hourly rates to be reasonable and will award the attorney's fees requested. (And all time billed to the matter was also reasonably incurred). Furthermore, Petitioner has provided supporting documentation for all claimed costs and Respondent offered no specific objection to the rates or amounts sought.

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs for successful claimants. Section 15(e). Accordingly, I hereby GRANT Petitioner's Motion for attorney's fees and costs. I award a total of **\$26,077.83 (representing \$25,345.10 for attorney's fees and \$732.73 in costs) as a lump sum in the form of a check jointly payable to Petitioner and Petitioner's counsel, Heather V. Menezes.** In the absence of a timely-filed motion for review (see Appendix B to the Rules of the Court), the Clerk of Court shall enter judgment in accordance with this Decision.³

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Brian H. Corcoran

Brian H. Corcoran
Chief Special Master

³ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), the parties may expedite entry of judgment by filing a joint notice renouncing their right to seek review.